



**Heart of the City Health Center
Administration**

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cherryhealth.org

TO: SENATOR MIKE SHIRKEY, CHAIR OF SENATE HEALTH POLICY COMMITTEE
FROM: CHRIS SHEA
SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 1013
DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2016
CC: MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH POLICY COMMITTEE

Chairman Shirkey,

I write you today to express our support for Senate Bill 1013, legislation to introduce dental therapists in Michigan. Cherry Health, the state's largest Federally Qualified Health Center, serves more than 66,000 residents at 20 locations throughout west and mid-Michigan. In 2015, Cherry Health provided nearly 95,000 dental encounters to 36,000 patients. While we have robust dental clinic operations in the Grand Rapids area serving west Michigan's underserved populations, one area we are currently targeting to include dental services is our site in Eaton County – one of the newest areas we serve.

In this planning phase to expand dental access in Eaton County, Cherry Health assessed the out-county areas (the areas except for the Lansing Area) for access to dental services for low-income individuals and found a shortage of 4.6 dentist FTE needed to adequately provide routine oral health services to the low-income population. That means an estimated 9,200 individuals in Eaton County are currently without a dental home.

Cherry Health is encouraged that the Senate Committee on Health Policy is exploring options to address the access to oral health care issue and Senate Bill 1013 is a critical step to improve access to dental care and create a true dental home for hundreds of thousands of Michiganders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Shea", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chris Shea
Chief Executive Officer
Cherry Health